

- k. Biological specimens:
  - The crime laboratory requires four vaginal, four anal, and four oral swabs. These swabs must be air-dried before being packaged and labeled.
  - The crime laboratory requires a whole blood sample from the victim and the suspect when apprehended. The blood sample must be labeled and refrigerated.

8.01.040

**PRESERVATION AND SHIPPING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT KITS: 03/95**

- 1. Precautions:
  - a. The investigator should remind medical personnel that:
    - Four vaginal, four anal, and four oral swabs must be collected as appropriate.
    - All swabs must be completely air-dried before packaging. This can be accomplished with a cool air fan in approximately one (1) hour.
    - All evidence such as tubes, swabs, envelopes, etc., must be properly labeled.
    - The materials in the sexual assault kit must be packaged in a sturdy container to avoid breakage during shipping.
    - Some commercial kits are enclosed in cartons designed for shipping.
  - b. The use of protective shipping containers-such as those containing "bubble" sheets or heavy padding may be necessary to prevent breakage.
  - c. The materials in the kit should not be subjected to a rapid rise in temperature, sudden changes in pressure and humidity, or exposed to damaging radiation, such as ultra-violet rays from the sun.
  - d. The handling of biological fluids and stains presents a hazard due to the possible presence of bloodborne pathogens. Hepatitis B (HVB) and AIDS (HIV) are of particular concern to those handling liquid blood or bloodstained items. Special care must be taken when handling such materials.
  - e. Investigators shall use universal precautions and treat all blood and bloodstained objects as sources of bloodborne pathogens, and take appropriate protective actions.
    - Good personal hygiene must be observed.
    - The hands should be washed thoroughly after the removal of protective gloves, even if the gloves are not cut or punctured.
    - Used protective gear must be properly disposed of.
    - See GOM 10.00.000 Exposure Control program.
  - f. **Blind searches are to be avoided.** Searchers must not place their hands into any space that is not first visually inspected.
- 2. Preservation of assault kits:
  - a. Facts of the case, case status, and laboratory readiness will dictate when the rape kit shall be sent to the WSPCL.
    - If it is to be sent within five (5) days of collection, the entire kit should be stored in the refrigerator at least two (2) hours before it is shipped.
  - b. If the kit is to be held longer than five (5) days after collection, the liquid blood sample must be removed from the kit, labeled, and refrigerated.
    - The remainder of the kit must be frozen until the laboratory is prepared to receive it.
    - In instances when the liquid blood sample becomes too aged (after one (1) to two (2) months), it may be necessary to draw another sample from the victim.

- This decision should be made after discussion with the laboratory personnel.
- c. If the case is a rape-homicide, the blood must be shipped to the WSPCL within five days.
  - The liquid blood sample from the victim should be refrigerated for at least two hours before shipping.
  - The remainder of the kit must be frozen until it is requested by the WSPCL.
- 3. Shipping procedures:

Sexual assault kits containing liquid blood samples should be sent to the WSPCL by Registered or Certified Mail or sent via UPS.

  - a. Liquid blood samples must be packaged according with the specific procedures described below.
    - Chill the blood at least two (2) hours before packaging for mailing.
    - Wrap the lavender-top tubes in an absorbent material (e.g., several facial tissues or a paper towel), and place them in small re-sealable plastic bag. Close the re-sealable plastic bag and seal the top edges together with evidence tape.
    - Place the sealed plastic bag containing the tubes into another re-sealable plastic bag and close and seal with tape.
      - The double plastic bags will protect against leakage.
    - Place the sealed plastic bags, the remainder of the sexual assault evidence kit, and the Request for Examination form in a sturdy container.
    - Seal the container with packaging tape for security and as a further precaution against leakage.
    - Wrap the container, if necessary, and place an address label on the container.
    - Mark the package "Clinical Specimen" so that it is visible to shipping personnel.
    - **Do not mark the container with the word Blood.**
  - b. CALL THE WSPCL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ARE UNSURE OF THE PROCEDURES.

8.01.045

**TRACE EVIDENCE: 05/07**

- 1. Introduction:

Small, often microscopic quantities of material have always been of interest to crime scene investigators. These particles can be the key to a successful investigation. An individual leaves or picks up traces of materials, however brief and slight the contact with another person or an environment (Locard's Principle of Exchange). Evidence that results from this exchange can connect the suspect with the victim and the crime scene. The connection is established by the comparison of trace evidence from a questioned source with samples from a known source (control); for example, glass found on a burglary suspect's clothing can be compared with glass from a broken window (known sample) at the burglary scene. **The timely collection of known samples from the victim, suspect, and the crime scene is critical.** Technological advances enable analysis of even smaller particles, placing an even greater burden on the investigator to find and collect the evidence. The search must be done carefully and thoroughly.
- 2. Precautions:
  - a. Since Locard's Principle of Exchange is always active, the investigator must use caution to avoid unnecessary, damaging exchange with the crime scene.